# THE POWER OF ONE 2015 Annual Report





#### Dear Friends,

As we celebrate our 20th anniversary and reflect on 2015, I am proud of PIRC's history of advocacy on behalf of the most vulnerable immigrants in need, individuals who have nowhere else to turn and who need help in seeking the protections of our laws. These individuals include asylum-seekers like Fadima and survivors of violence like Gabriela's mom. Often it has been the *power of one* advocate or one volunteer or one courageous voice that makes all the difference in turning despair into hope. Together, we have been creating the possibility of hope for so many for the past 20 years.

The year 2015 was marked with many accomplishments and a few shortfalls. PIRC served more than 1,900 immigrants in detention, and 177 immigrant survivors in the community. PIRC also collaborated with other service providers to share ideas and resources and educate the community so that more immigrants could access services in a meaningful, impactful way. Further, while we closed the calendar year with more expenses than funding, our mission and work were bolstered by the hiring of a part-time development manager and an additional attorney. These changes in PIRC's staff are positioning PIRC to provide additional services in our detention programs and to continue building organizational sustainability, working on both *the needs of today and the needs of tomorrow*.

We could not do what we do without the volunteers, funders, donors, and supporters who have been with us every step of the way in our history. For the past 20 years, PIRC has been focused on the mission of ensuring access to vulnerable immigrants. With the help of our friends and supporters, we will continue to do so in the coming year and reach our goals of creating hope for more individuals like Fadima and Gabriela's mom. If you are not currently engaged with PIRC's work through a donation of your time, talent or financial resources, I urge you to go to our website and learn more about all that we do. **The power of one person, one idea, one action can transform lives.** 

Kind regards,

Andrew Mahon, Board President

# To Change Lives

Throughout our annual report, you will read stories of the incredible people who make this work possible. PIRC and our services have been built by the **power of one**. Over the years, it has been one individual or one group that has had the courage and determination to stand up for justice and take action where injustice was seen. Each day we see how the power of one courageous voice can truly change lives, and how the power of one partnership can open doors to possibilities which before never existed. As PIRC marks its 20th anniversary, we hope to continue building on this power as we grow our programs and transform more lives.



**PIRC Mission**: PIRC was founded in 1996 on the principles of service and access to justice in response to the detention of the refugees of the Golden Venture. Our principles guide PIRC's programs, protecting immigrants' rights to freedom and opportunity in the United States, giving voice to the most vulnerable immigrants and their families. PIRC provides free, effective legal representation, legal services, education and advocacy to help immigrants obtain or protect their legal status.

> "PIRC has completely transformed since we set it up in 1996. It has gone from a shoestring operation with no paid staff to a highly effective legal services and advocacy entity." – Jeffrey Lobach, cofounder of PIRC, managing partner at Barley Snyder Attorneys at Law



### **2015 Board of Directors**

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**Russel Wert** (Vice President) Edward Jones

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PIRC Board left to right: Andy Mahon (President), Russ Wert (Vice President), Angus Love, Clasina Houtman (Secretary), Leanne Miller, Mary Studzinski (Executive Director). Absent: Laura Smith and Richelle Hamberger (Treasurer)

Photo © Casey Albright



Asylum-seekers who have legal representation are three times more likely to be granted asylum than those who have no attorney.

## Advocate

PIRC helps immigrants to help themselves. PIRC is the only service provider in Pennsylvania—one of only 18 providers in the nation—offering the Legal **Orientation Program (LOP)** to immigrants held in civil detention who are waiting for their deportation hearing. PIRC's LOP informs and assists individuals in detention to mount their own defense by providing:

PIRC has provided services in the Berks County Residential Center for more There are between 600-800 immigrants detained in the York County Prison on than a decade. As the needs of the individuals in this detention center have any given day, and 82-92 family members at the family detention center in Berks changed over the years, PIRC has structured services differently in response. In County (Berks County Residential Center). Immigrants facing removal who fear 2015, PIRC collaborated with HIAS Philadelphia, the AILA Philadelphia Chapter, being returned to their home country face numerous barriers: language, limited Human Rights First, and the ACLU to coordinate pro bono representation, legal understanding of U.S. immigration laws, isolation, and little understanding assistance, advocacy, and post-release services, when possible. of their rights. The services provided by the LOP are in most cases the only assistance individuals will receive before their immigration hearing.

"PIRC saves lives. And does so over and over. ... The lives saved by PIRC include adults and children who face torture in their homelands, victims of sexual abuse and assault, and those fleeing unimaginable violence." – Shoba Wadhia, director for Penn State Law Center for Immigrants' Rights, professor

• Classes: PIRC attorneys provide education specifically designed to educate individuals about their rights, what to expect in court, and about their potential for legal remedies. In 2015, PIRC provided services to over 1,600 detained immigrants at the York County Prison and over **300** family members at the Berks County Residential Center.

• Pro Se Assistance: PIRC attorneys, interns, and volunteers help immigrants in detention with research, translation, and legal materials, allowing them to include more evidence to support their cases.

PIRC is the voice for the most vulnerable. Through the Vulnerable Persons in Detention Program, PIRC attorneys represent individuals who have mental health challenges, who are illiterate, and who have fled trauma, torture and persecution in their home country. All are seeking safety from harm in the United States and need an attorney to advocate for them before an immigration judge. In 2015, PIRC provided 37 immigrants in detention with free legal representation. The power of an advocate through this process cannot be understated.



"I love my mom because she is my hero"

## The Power of One...

PIRC first met Gabriela\* and her mom and siblings when she was living in a home filled with violence. Gabriela and her brother and sister were born in the U.S., but their mom was undocumented. Gabriela's mom came to the U.S. when she was 13 months old and grew up as an undocumented child. After high school, she married a U.S. citizen. Shortly after they were married, Gabriela's father began beating her mother and calling her names. He promised to file immigration papers for her mother but he never did.

He told Gabriela's mom that if her she went to the police, he would have her deported—and she would never see her children again.

Gabriela's father used her mother's lack of immigration status to control her and isolate her. For many years, Gabriela's mom thought she had no choice. One day in desperation, she told a friend about the violence she was experiencing and that she felt frightened and trapped because of her undocumented status. Her friend told her to call PIRC.

Under existing American laws designed to help victims of domestic violence, PIRC helped Gabriela's mom connect with victim services and helped her get a work card and then a green card. PIRC legal staff helped Gabriela's mom and children leave a life of violence and threats and find a life of safety and hope.

\* Name has been changed to protect identity.

## **Courageous Voice**

It takes courage to step out of the shadows. PIRC's Immigrant Survivors **Project** staff meets with courageous immigrant survivors of sexual and domestic abuse and educates them about the laws that protect them, helping them find a better future for themselves and their children. As in Gabriela's mother's case, some survivors do not choose to become undocumented, and their lack of immigration status becomes a way for abusers to threaten to have them deported, separating them from their children here in the U.S. PIRC's free legal services provide the protection of American laws and helps survivors to obtain work authorization and lawful status.

survivors in our community.



The Immigrant Survivors Project serves immigrant survivors in nine counties in south central Pennsylvania and is the only provider in the region providing these services. In 2015, the ISP provided free immigration legal services to 177



Obtaining work authorization and lawful status can transform lives. Survivors are able to leave their abusers, find educational and employment opportunities, provide for their children and, perhaps for the first time, help them feel safe.

PIRC partners with 13 victim services agencies to ensure survivors get the assistance they need with shelter, counseling, and other legal assistance.

### **Partners:**

YWCA of York/York County YWCA of Hanover, Safe Home/York County Survivors, Inc./Adams County Women in Need (WIN)/Franklin and Fulton Counties Domestic Violence Services/Lancaster County Lancaster YWCA/Lancaster County Harrisburg YWCA/Dauphin County Sexual Assault Resource and Counseling Center/Lebanon County Domestic Violence Intervention of Lebanon County/Lebanon County YWCA Carlisle/Cumberland County Domestic Violence Services of Cumberland and Perry Counties/ Cumberland County and Perry County Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape

"PIRC is the link, it is the hope, it is the light that guides immigrants to safety." - Michele Pistone, Villanova Law Director of Clinic for Asylum, Refugee and Emigrant Services, professor



### Partnering to serve more immigrants in need

### Light of Liberty award for pro bono service in 2015

## Partnership

### Partnering to provide community training and outreach

PIRC provides education and outreach in the community to inform service In PIRC's work, language access takes many forms: the interpreter who is the providers and community members about immigrant rights and issues involving voice of an asylum-seeker or of an immigrant victim of violence when speaking to a PIRC attorney; the volunteer who translates important documents into access to justice. English; the legal materials that are distributed in dozens of languages so • PIRC partnered with Physicians for Human Rights and the PA Psychological immigrants can understand their rights and legal options; and the direct Association in a daylong training on the documentation of trauma attended communication that takes place between a bilingual PIRC staff person and the by physicians, psychologists, and social workers in the region. Attendees traumatized person they are serving.

- in Pennsylvania.

"Wherever you turn, you can find someone who needs you. Even if it is a little thing, do something for which there is no pay but the privilege of doing it. Remember, you don't live in the world all of your own." – Albert Schweitzer

learned how to develop forensic evaluations and reports to document the trauma experienced by asylum-seekers. Many of these attendees have volunteered to help asylum-seekers in detention.

• PIRC hosted a farmworker conference in partnership with Migrant Education Migrant Health, and Friends of Farmworkers of Philadelphia to educate community providers in the region on identifying and providing coordinated services to farmworker victims. Farmworkers face specific barriers to accessing justice due to their extreme geographic isolation, economic dependence on employers, high rates of illiteracy, poverty, and lack of immigration status.

• PIRC partnered with Manavi and the Asian and Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence to host two cultural-awareness trainings to educate community providers about overcoming cultural barriers. This training focused on serving the unique needs of Asian and Pacific Islander and Southeast Asian populations, two underserved victim populations

• PIRC attorneys provided continuing legal education to over 90 private attorneys on topics such as Asylum and Withholding; Immigration and Detention Basics; Humanitarian Relief; and Immigration Relief for Victims of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Other Crimes.

### A difference-maker in accessing justice: language access

Access to justice cannot happen if an asylum-seeker or immigrant survivor cannot communicate with the advocates and service providers who want to help or cannot communicate with law enforcement or government officials with whom they interact. Language access is necessary if individuals who do not speak English well are to understand their complicated legal case. Language access means a PIRC staff or volunteer attorney can understand the details of trauma and violence when they listen to a survivor's story, an immigrant survivor can understand critical information about their rights and options under existing law, and service providers and law enforcement agencies will use gualified interpreters and not permit abusers or family members to serve as interpreters.

In the community, PIRC advocates for language access by providing education and training for service providers, providing them with tools to bridge the language and cultural gaps that may exist with the immigrants they serve.



### **Celebrating Each Volunteer**

In June 2016, PIRC hosted its fifth annual Light of Liberty Awards Reception, honoring the many volunteers and supporters who provided assistance in 2015 and awarding individuals who went above and beyond to make access to justice possible for those who need it most. As we celebrated our 20th anniversary, we welcomed former PIRC executive director Kristen Uhler-McKeown as the 2016 Light of Liberty keynote speaker, who spoke not only of the importance of PIRC's work, but about how much we have accomplished. We couldn't have come this far without the incredible time, talent, and support provided by the amazing volunteers and supporters who have truly transformed lives.

### Volunteer Spotlight:

Over the past few years, David Freedman, a partner attorney at Barley Snyder Attorneys at Law in Lancaster, PA, went above and beyond to assist clients and afford them the dignity they deserve. Mr. Freedman has taken on multiple PIRC pro bono cases, including challenging habeus and asylum cases, and in each has worked tirelessly, overcoming challenges to advocate for his clients.

One such example is Rosa\*, a young survivor of sexual violence. The trauma Rosa experienced made her feel depressed and suicidal. Adding to the weight of this trauma was the burden Rosa felt knowing that she and her sister and her mom were undocumented and at risk of deportation. Rosa couldn't remember living anywhere other than the U.S. as she came to the country at a very young age. The U.S. was her home.

Attorney Freedman took on Rosa's case and worked with her every step of the way. Although Rosa was eligible for a U-Visa, a type of visa for victims of certain crimes, the sexual violence that Rosa experienced occurred years before and had gone unreported, making the option of a U-Visa more challenging. The journey was difficult, but Attorney Freedman did not give up. His hard work and advocacy paid off. He was able to get the evidence he needed so that Rosa, her sister, and her mother are now on the road to a more permanent and stable status in the U.S. and hopefully one day may become U.S. citizens. Attorney Freedman's work gave Rosa and the other clients he has served hope for a new life.

\* Name has been changed to protect identity.

## Volunteer

Twenty years ago, PIRC was formed by a group of volunteers, and today Law Firm: CARES Clinic at Villanova Law Clinic volunteers fill the same critical functions they did since the start. In 2015, the Detained Programs Pro Bono Attorney: Joseph Hohenstein 50+ volunteers who supported PIRC are truly inspirational individuals who demonstrate the ways in which one person can make real change. Today, **Community Programs Pro Bono Attorney:** David Freedman volunteers make it possible for vulnerable immigrants to obtain life-changing legal status, win humanitarian relief, and feel safety and hope for the first time in Volunteer Interpreter/Translator: Tesfagiorgis Ghebreslassie years.

community.

PIRC's service reach.

### The Power of Each Volunteer

PIRC works with private attorneys and law students to provide legal representation and case assistance to individuals in detention and the

 In 2015, private attorneys from York, Dauphin, Lancaster, and Cumberland counties and Philadelphia provided pro bono legal assistance to clients in our Detained and Community Programs.

Volunteers outside the legal community also offer critical services that broaden

• In 2015, community volunteers provided translation and interpretation assistance, medical and psychological evaluations, and marketing and administration support. The talent and hard work of our volunteers culminated in more individuals receiving services. Through the work of volunteers, vulnerable immigrants:

• were able to include important evidence in their immigration cases

• were represented by an attorney who advocated on their behalf

• were able to tell their stories to an immigration judge

The results of our volunteer work is astounding. Without the support of volunteers, our work would not be possible. Together, we are opening doors for creating new lives for those who need it most.

### **Light of Liberty Award Recipients:**

**Professional Volunteer:** Susanna Francies

Voice of Courage: Mayra Medina

Continuing Commitment to Justice, Organization: York County Bar Foundation/York County Bar Association

Continuing Commitment to Justice, Individual: Charles and Toni Rausch



Pictured: Sarah Martin-Torres, PIRC's ISP coordinator: Mayra Medina, Light of Liberty award winner: and her children.

Photo © Casey Albright

"Everybody can be great. Because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve.... You don't have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love." – Martin Luther King, Jr.



### 1996

PIRC is founded by volunteers who work long hours to provide legal representation and know-your-rights presentations to vulnerable immigrants in detention.

### 2004

PIRC grows from two full-time and one part-time staff to three full-time and one part-time staff.

### 2006

PIRC begins offering the Legal Orientation Program at the York County Prison, doubling the organization's capacity for direct services.

### 2008

PIRC begins Legal Orientation Program services for families held in detention at the Berks family detention center.

## 2009

Volunteers from the York County community form a working group, the Central Pennsylvania Immigration Project, to provide legal assistance to immigrant survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and similar crimes.

## **PIRC Through the Years**

2010

2012

## 2013

PIRC expands services to immigrant survivors in nine counties in south central Pennsylvania: Adams, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Fulton, Lancaster, Lebanon, Perry, York.

## 2015

PIRC joins forces with other nonprofits to form the Berks Pro Bono Collaborative to increase the assistance provided for families held in immigration detention.

## 2015

PIRC volunteers provide \$236,000 worth of life-transforming services to vulnerable immigrants.

The Central Pennsylvania Immigration Project becomes a program of PIRC, serving York and Adams counties.

2016

PIRC staff grows to 10.

### PIRC hosts the first Light of Liberty Awards Reception to honor the transformative work of our volunteers.

### Today

PIRC has provided legal orientation services to over 15,000 detained immigrants awaiting their immigration hearing.

Since 2010, PIRC has served more than 300 immigrant survivors as well as their immigrant and U.S. citizen children, obtaining immigration status and creating lives of safety.

In 2016, the Central Pennsylvania Immigration Project was renamed the Immigrant Survivors Project, reflecting the work we do and the admiration we hold for the immigrants who survive violence and have the resiliency to build new lives of hope and opportunity.

# 2015 at A Glance

In 2015, PIRC focused resources on program services, devoting 92 percent of expenses to serving vulnerable immigrants. PIRC leveraged an additional \$236,725 of in-kind services from attorneys, interpreters, translators, and other volunteers to provide additional critical services.

### Revenue 1.2% Public / Government Funding \$398.327 Foundations / IOLTA \$178.613 29.8% Individual Contributions \$15.020 66.5% Other Revenue \$7.089 Expenses 3% 5% Fundraising \$20.280 Operations / Administration \$32,190 Program Services \$572.643 92%

## The Power of One... Donation

We are truly grateful for the support from our community. The support PIRC received from the donors and funders in 2015 made it possible for programs to continue and grow, and more importantly, for vulnerable immigrants to access life-transforming services. Every contribution makes an impact, ensuring access to justice and giving hope... one individual at a time.

### Individual Donors

### Anonymous

- Oscar Barbosa
- Lynne Brown
- Wendy Chan
- Scott and Stephanie Duques
- Angela Edris
- Diane Elderkin
- Jill Family and Nicholas Stapp
- Rosanna Felix
- William Gierasch
- Judith Marie Gilroy
- Clasina Houtman
- Ida Lamberti
- Cindy and Jeff Lobach
- Angus Love Anna Magallanes
- Andrew Mahon
- Troy Mattes
- Joseph McDevitt

### **Flizabeth Miller** Thomas and Jill Miller

- Todd and Leslie Platts
- Jayesh Rathod
- Charles and Toni Rausch
- Henry Rhoads
- Joseph and Rosemarie Sallemi
- Daniel Schwarz
- Craig Sharnetzka
- Pierre Thompson
- Justin Tomevi
- Craig Trebilcock and Family
- John Uhler and Susan Uhler
- James Wade
- Frank Weaver
- Mary Studzinski
- Laurie Wiest
- Kenneth Woerthwein
- Robert and Judith Woods



dollar invested.



start a new life.

Your financial support creates impact, benefiting the community economically and creating safety and opportunity for immigrant survivors and their children.

A York County Bar Foundation (YCBF)-funded economic impact study completed in 2014 measured the impact of YCBF-funded legal services programs, including PIRC's legal programs. The study showed that investing in the legal service programs produces a significant economic impact within the community, yielding an economic return of nine dollars for every

Donations and financial support helped families like Jenny and her daughters

### Private Foundations, Corporations, and Other Organizations:

**AILA** Philadelphia

Barley Snyder, Attorneys at Law

Glatfelter Insurance

Herbert M. Rehmeyer Trust

Holberg Design Inc.

Pennsylvania IOLTA Board

Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia Law Foundation of Berks County Mennonite Central Committee Philadelphia Bar Foundation Round Hill Presbyterian Church William and Mildred Kaplan Foundation York County Bar Association

York County Bar Foundation















#### 2015 PIRC Staff

#### **Detained Programs**

Mary Studzinski, Executive Director

Matthew Lamberti, Managing Attorney Selby Abraham, Staff Attorney Ryan Brunsink, Staff Attorney Tamara Shehadeh-Cope, Staff Attorney Michelle Diaz, Paralegal

#### **Community Programs**

Diana Locke, Managing Attorney Sarah Martin-Torres, ISP Coordinator Nadina Feakins, Legal Advocate

#### **Development/Administration**

Elizabeth Miller, Development Manager/Office Manager Angelica Ramos, Office Assistant

#### **2015 PIRC Volunteers**

We cannot express enough the admiration we have for the volunteers in our communities who stepped forward to lend their time and talent to individuals who need it most. Again and again, the work of our volunteers produced incredible results. From each document translated to each challenging case taken on, the power of one individual to change lives was made clear. We are extremely grateful to work alongside you to ensure access to justice and transform lives.

Amin Alawi Bertrand Alcide Michelle Bobadilla-Vidal J. Alex Brophy CARES Clinic - Villanova Law Johelys Cecela Wendy Chan Daniel Conklin Susana Cortina de Canalas Eugene Creany Michelle Diaz Carol Anne Donohoe Eliza Donohue Judy Eidelson Rosanna Felix Susanna Francies David Freedman Conchita Garcia

Tesfagiorgis Ghebreslassie Brennan Giangrasso Patricia Gready Suzan Greenberg Gabriela Grezina Rosalyn Groff **Richelle Hamberger** Elizabeth Hoffman Joseph Hohenstein Ben Hooper Clasina Houtman Katelvn Hufe Kalev Keener Bob Lefevre Laura Lopez Ledesma Angus Love Andrew Mahon Mavra Medina

Ryan Meunnich Leanne Miller Rebecca Munscher Tatiana Pakula Christina Powers Morgan Reed Tamara Shehadeh-Cope Laura Smith Suzanne Smith Ed Spreha Robert Stein Justin Tomevi Arno Vosk Russel Wert Laurie Wiest Elliot Young



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